

# Korean Translations of Vietnam: Relocating the Korean Great Han Empire in World-Historical Precedent

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## Introduction

On May 5, 1909, citing the damage they had caused to the peace and order of the Great Han Empire, then a Japanese protectorate, Home Minister Pak Chesun 朴齊純 (1858–1916) banned the sale and distribution of two immensely popular Korean-language translations by Hyŏn Ch’ae 玄采 (1856–1925) and Yi Sangik 李相益 (1881–?) of *Yuenan wangguo shi* 越南亡國史 (The history of the fall of Vietnam), titled *Wŏllam mangguk sa* 월남망국사 in Korean.<sup>1</sup> As soon as it had been published in Shanghai in 1905, the original literary Sinitic text by Vietnamese independence activist Phan Boi Chau 潘佩珠 (1867–1940) was in broad circulation in Korea.<sup>2</sup> A little more than two years before the book was banned, the book dealers Chu Han’yŏng 朱翰榮 (?–?) and Kim Sangman 金相萬 (?–?) together took out an advertisement that ran in every issue of the Hwangŏng sinmun 皇城新聞 [Imperial capital news] for a month, in which they promoted the purchase of Hyŏn Ch’ae’s translation in particular

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1 “Naebu kosi che-27 ho” 內部告示第二七號 [Interior ministry notification no. 27], *Kwanbo* 官報 [Official gazette] 4370 (May 7, 1909): 27. In the present article, the Chinese title *Yuenan wangguo shi* refers to the Chinese-language source text while the Korean title *Wŏllam mangguk sa* refers to the Korean-language translations of the Chinese source text.

2 The original text was published by Phan Boi Chau under the pen name “Chaonanzi, the refugee from Vietnam,” [Yuenan wangming ko Chaonanzi 越南亡命客巢南子], under the title of *Yuenan wangguo shi* 越南亡國史 [The history of the fall of Vietnam] (Shanghai: Guangzhi shuju, 1905, reprinted 1907, 1908). The Chinese reformer Liang Qichao 梁啟超 wrote a preface and took charge of publishing the work in a series he edited in Shanghai, which led to the work being included in Liang’s collected works despite Phan’s authorship, see Xu Shanfu 徐善福, “Guanyu <Yunnan wangguo shi> de zuozhe” 关于《越南亡國史》的作者问题 [On the author of the *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*], *Dong Nanya zhongheng* 东南亚纵横 3 (1992): 35–37. The Korean translations of this period, however, include dialogue between Liang and Phan as well as essays by Liang entitled *Myŏlguk sinbŏp ron* 滅國新法論 [Treatise on a new method of destroying nations] and *Ilbon ūi Chosŏn* 日本的朝鮮 [Japan’s Chosŏn], among others. These edited volumes may therefore be understood as co-authored. Hyŏn Ch’ae produced the first translation into Korean, published by Posŏnggwan 普成館 in 1906 and reprinted in 1907. Chu Sigyŏng 周時經 (1876–1914) produced the second translation, published by Pangmun Sŏgwan 博文書館 in 1907 and reprinted twice in 1908. Yi Sangik produced the third translation in 1907 but the publisher is unclear.

as an urgent matter of patriotism: “We only wish that patriotic young men of purpose will try at least once to read this book.”<sup>3</sup> The tale of the Vietnamese fall to the French was a warning to Koreans who loved their country that the same fate awaited them should they remain indifferent to the loss of Korean sovereignty under the newly established Japanese protectorate. A text that inspired popular patriotic fervor would seem a boon to the Korean state, but by the spring of 1909, a little more than one year before its complete annexation by the Japanese Empire, the Home Ministry was in no position to tolerate, let alone encourage, challenges to the authority of the Japanese Protectorate General; what had recently been a patriotic duty now became a crime against the state.

Most existing scholarship has identified *Wöllam mangguk sa* as a call to Korean patriotism in the face of imminent annexation. Indeed, the first Korean translation of Phan’s account of the Vietnamese fall to French imperialism was in circulation so close to the establishment of the Japanese protectorate over the Great Han Empire in 1905 that the parallels could hardly be missed. More recent scholarship has convincingly identified *Wöllam mangguk sa* as part of a new international consciousness among younger Korean intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century that was coeval with the emergence of early Korean nationalist ideologies.<sup>4</sup> The circulations of the Vietnam case in general and *Wöllam mangguk sa* in particular in the rhetorical praxes of the Korean imperial court, however, speak to a more nuanced intellectual dynamic in which an existing historical consciousness of East Asian states and statesmen integrated the fall of Vietnam and the processes of global imperialism which it represented into a hybrid historical consciousness that removed the Great Han Empire and its predicament from a national or regional history and relocated it in a global history that was unfolding in the early twentieth century.

Until relatively recently, scholarly interest in *Wöllam mangguk sa* was minimal. The greater portion of the research to date concerns publication

3 Having first appeared in *Hwangšong sinmun* 皇城新聞 (January 5, 1907): 3, the advertisement subsequently appeared the same year on p. 4 of each of the daily editions of January 7–12, January 26 and 28, February 2 and 4. All translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

4 Ko Pyönggwön 고병권 and O Sönmin 오선민, “Naesyönliljüm ijön ūi int’önaesyönl: *Wöllam mangguk sa* ūi Chosöndö pönyök e taehayö” 내셔널리즘 이전의 인터내셔널 [The international prior to nationalism: On the Korean translation of *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*] *Han’guk hyöndaeh munhak yön’gu* 한국현대문학연구 21 (2010): 293–323.

history and questions of translational faithfulness.<sup>5</sup> This is especially true of some of the earlier work by Kim Künsu<sup>6</sup> and Ch'oe Kiyōng,<sup>7</sup> but also of more recent writings by Yi Chongmi,<sup>8</sup> Song Yehui (Song Yōphwi), and Song Myōngjin.<sup>9</sup> The most common interpretive approach to *Wōllam mangguk sa* is as an appeal to patriots. This is perhaps less interpretation than a recapitulation of the salient points of Phan's argument: patriots must stand guard against foreign aggression lest sovereignty and the nation are lost. According to the 1975 summary of the text by Kim Künsu, the reasons for the fall of Vietnam to the French were government corruption, social and political conservatism, an unwillingness to reform state and society through the study of various fields of Western learning, and a

5 Yi Kimun 이기문, “Haesöl” 解說 [Critical introduction] in Chu Sigyōng 周時經, *Chu Sigyōng chōnjip* 周時經全集 [The collected works of Chu Sigyōng] (Seoul: Asia Munhwasa, 1976), 13–14; Ch'oe Kiyōng 崔起榮, “Kugyōk *Wōllam mangguk sa* e kwanhan il koch'al” 國譯 越南亡國史에 대한 一考察 [An examination of the Korean translation of *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*], *Tonga yōn'gu* 東亞研究 6 (1985): 487–506; Chōng Hwan'guk 鄭煥局, “Kūndae kyemong ki yōksa chōn'gimul pōnyōk e taehayō: *Wōllam mangguk sa* wa It'aeri kōn'guk sangōl chōn ūi kyōngu” 근대계몽기 역사전기물 번역에 대하여: 越南亡國史와 伊太利建國三傑傳의 경우 [On Enlightenment Period translations of historical biographies: the cases of *The History of the Fall of Vietnam* and *Biographies of Three Heroes of the Founding of Italy*], *Taedong munhwa yōn'gu* 大東文化研究 48 (2004): 1–32; Ch'oe Pakkwang 최박광, “*Wōllam mangguk sa* wa tongasia ūi chisigindūi” 월남망국사와 동아시아의 지식인들 [The History of the Fall of Vietnam and East Asian intellectuals], *Inmun kwahak* 인문과학 36 (2005): 7–23; Pak Sangsōk 박상석, “*Wōllam mangguk sa* ūi yut'ong kwa syōng” 월남망국사의 유통과 수용 [The circulation and reception of *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*], *Yōnmin hakchi* 淵民學志 14 (2010): 81–104. These authors use the publication history of the text to make a case for its universal popularity. For studies on a Korean Catholic critique of *Wōllam mangguk sa*, see Ch'oe Kiyōng 崔起榮, “Hanmal ūi ch'ōnju kyohoe wa *Wōllam mangguk sa*” 한말의 천주교회와 越南亡國史 [The Hanmal-period Catholic church and *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*], *Asia Munhwa* 아시아문화 12 (1996): 393–418; Pak Sangsōk, “*Wōllam mangguk sa*.”

6 Kim Künsu 金根洙, “*Wōllam mangguk sa* e taehayō” 越南亡國史에 대하여 [On *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*], *Han'gukhak* 韓國學 5 (1975): 27–35.

7 Ch'oe Kiyōng, “Kugyōk *Wōllam mangguk sa*.”

8 Yi Chongmi 이종미, “*Wōllam mangguk sa* wa kungnae pōnyōkpon pigyo yōn'gu: Hyōn Ch'ae pon kwa Chu Sigyōng pon ūl chungsim ūro” 越南亡國史와 국내번역본 비교 연구: 玄采本과 周時經本을 중심으로 [A comparative study of Korean translations of *The History of the Fall of Vietnam: the Hyōn Ch'ae and Chu Sigyōng texts*], *Chungguk inmun kwahak* 中國人文科學 34 (2006): 499–521.

9 Song Yōphwi 宋擘輝, “*Wōllam mangguk sa* pōnyōk kwajōng e natanan che munje” 越南亡國史의 翻譯에 나타난 諸問題 [Problems arising in the translation of *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*], *Ōmun yōn'gu* 語文研究 34, no. 4 (2006): 183–204; Song Myōngjin 송명진, “*Wōllam mangguk sa* ūi pōnyōk, munch'e, ch'ulp'an” 월남망국사의 번역, 문체, 출판 [The translation, literary style, and publication of *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*], *Hyōndae munhak ūi yōn'gu* 현대문학의 연구 42 (2010): 171–203. For a contrasting interpretation of Liang Qichao's understanding of the place of China in the world, see Xiaobing Tang, *Global Space and the Nationalist Discourse of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). See also Yang Kyech'o [Liang Qichao], comp., *Yōkchu Wōllam mangguk sa* 역주 월남망국사 [An annotated translation of *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*], trans. An Myōngch'ŏl 안명철 and Song Yōphwi 송엽휘 (P'aju: T'aehaksa, 2007).

general apathy on the part of the Vietnamese people.<sup>10</sup> Korean translators intended their readers to take these critiques as equally applicable to Korea in order to mobilize them to save Korean sovereignty from Japanese aggression and avoid the kind of national suffering and humiliation that the Vietnamese were suffering. The polemical nature of *Wöllam mangguk sa* makes these elements hard to miss; the studies that focus on these aspects of the text are irrefutable but, like the publication studies, they are analytically limited.

There is, however, another class of work on *Wöllam mangguk sa*, and on Korean perceptions of Vietnam at the turn of the twentieth century in general, that goes beyond questions of translational fidelity and the narrower concerns over the defense of national sovereignty. In one of the earlier studies of this kind, Ch'oe Wönsik notes that *Wöllam mangguk sa*, in both its original version and in its various Korean translations, demonstrates an incipient pan-Asianism, or what he called an “Asian solidarity.”<sup>11</sup> Much later, Yun Taeyöng catalogues references to Vietnam in Korean state and vernacular literatures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first years of the twentieth century in particular saw the emergence of what Yun calls the “Vietnam wave” (*wölllyu* 越流), a play on the current “Korean wave” in the popularity of South Korean popular culture both within and beyond East Asia. While not exactly a manifestation of popular culture, the increasing frequency of references in popular and official texts in the final years of the Han Empire does suggest that Vietnam had a distinct currency in many circles.<sup>12</sup>

Among the most interesting approaches to *Wöllam mangguk sa* has been that of Ko Pyönggwön and O Sönmin. They posit the impossibility of translating *Yuenan wangguo shi* into Korean prior to the formation of a conceptual and lexical vocabulary that encompassed the notion of nation. Ko and O see the concept of nation as necessarily an intellectual import, an artifact of the international exchanges that had characterized the

10 Kim Künsu, “*Wöllam mangguk sa* e taehayö,” 35.

11 Ch'oe Wönsik 崔元植, “Asia ü yönda: *Wöllam mangguk sa* sogo” 아시아의 連帶: 越南亡國史 小考 [Asian solidarity: a brief study of *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*], in *Han'guk munhak üi hyöndan'gye* [The modern phase of Korean literature] vol. 2, ed. Paek Nakchöng and Kang Muung (Seoul: Changjak kwa Pip'yöng, 1983).

12 Yun Taeyöng 尹大榮, “19-segi huban 20-segi ch'o Han'guk üi Pet'unam chae insik kwajöng kwa kü söngkyök” 19세기 후반 – 20세기초, 한국의 베트남의 재인식 과정과 그 성격 [The character and process of Korean reconceptualizations of Vietnam in the mid- to late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries], *Tongyang sahak yön'gu* 東洋史學研究 112 (2010): 191–221. See also Chöng Sönt'ae 정선태, “Kyemong üi tamnon: kaehwagi munhwajök sösa tamnon üi chöngch'ijök riöllijüm e kwanhan yön'gu siron” 계몽의 담론: 개화기 문화적 서사 담론의 정치적 리얼리즘에 관한 연구 시론 [The discourse of enlightenment: an essay on the study of political realism in the discourse of enlightenment-period cultural narrative], *Oeguk munhak* 외국문학 47 (1996): 202–224.

place of Chosŏn and the Great Han Empire in the world since the 1860s. Thus, Ko and O suggest an international before the national that made the widespread popularity of the Korean *Wŏllam mangguk sa* translations of *Yuenan wangguo shi* possible and placed the various versions in a firmly transnational space.<sup>13</sup>

These dynamics in Korean circulations of Phan Boi Chau's work suggest a process quite close to those globalizing currents in late Qing historical consciousness as understood by Rebecca Karl. Karl posits an intellectual history of Chinese nationalism historiographically occluded by many historians' focus on a binary opposition between China and Japan on the one hand and the West on the other. The conceptual category of the "Chinese nation" arises at the turn of the twentieth century not so much as a struggle against the modernity of the West but rather as a struggle of modernity through a global process of historical understanding, an understanding of the socio-political and geopolitical problems of the Qing Empire as part of global historical processes. Karl shows how these interactions led a small group of Qing intellectuals to reject their initial internationalist engagements and their faith in the efficacy of the Qing imperial state and embrace a revolutionary ethno-racial nationalism that contributed to the collapse of the Qing Empire and the establishment of the Republic.<sup>14</sup>

Much like the globalization of historical consciousness in the late Qing modern in Karl's work, the circulations of the Korean vernacular translations of the *Wŏllam mangguk sa* texts suggest a rising awareness of the global historical transformation of which the Great Han Empire is a part and potentially a victim. There are differences, however, in the ways the *mangguk sa/wangguo shi* genre was consumed in the late Qing Empire and the Great Han Empire. First, many readers and translators of Phan's work moved across the borders of state and public sphere in a way the intellectuals studied by Karl did not. In fact, people such as An Chonghwa 安鍾和 (1860–1924)<sup>15</sup> were involved in the publication of one of the Korean translations of Phan as well as in policy debate at the Korean imperial court. Second, the presence of a global historical consciousness as represented by references to European colonialism did not necessarily

13 Ko Pyŏnggwŏn and O Sŏnmin, "Naesyŏnŏllijŭm ijŏn e int'ŏnaesyŏnŏl," 293–323.

14 Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World: Chinese Internationalism at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 3–6, 14–17, 195–198.

15 This name is alternately rendered 安種和. See An Chonghwa 安種和, "*Wŏllam mangguk sa sŏ*" 越南亡國史序 [Introduction to *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*], in Phan Boi Chau, *Wŏllam Mangguk sa* 越南亡國史, comp. Liang Qichao, trans. Hyŏn Ch'ae 玄采 (Seoul: Posŏnggwan 普成館, 1906), 1.

represent a radical break from previous understandings of history. The spatial extent of what constituted history worth knowing expanded, as Karl's work on late Qing and the research of Ko and O show; the turn of the twentieth century in both the Qing and the Great Han Empires is an intellectual and historiographical moment of transnationality. At the Korean imperial court, however, older historical knowledge mixed quite comfortably with more recent events, so that the increasingly global understanding of history was not a process whereby old regimes of knowledge died away. Instead, court officials incorporated new bodies of historical knowledge into their existing banks of case studies. History became global in its spatial remit but it also remained temporally universal as members of the Korean imperial court were perfectly comfortable with analyzing current issues through the historical knowledge they already possessed, continually enhanced by new knowledge of world history as it became accessible.

The result was the emergence of a hybrid sense of world historical precedent that combined received Chinese and Korean histories with more recent narratives of European imperialism, particularly in Vietnam, to create a historical accounting for the conquest and erasure of states and peoples. This unfolding of a sense of global history as understood, in part, through the fall of Vietnam is particularly apparent in the opposition voiced in the court in response to the Korean signing of the Japan–Korea Protectorate Treaty in 1905. There were more than sixty memorials submitted to the throne in an effort to convince the emperor to punish the officials responsible and to reject the treaty outright as a violation of his will. It is in these texts and their connection to *Wöllam mangguk sa* that this synthetic world-historical perspective emerges.

### **Vietnam in Korea: Translations and appropriations, 1905–1908**

Even before the publication of any Korean translations of *Yuenan wangguo shi*, the Vietnam-as-warning trope was well established in the Korean press. In May 1906, one year after the first publication of *Yuenan wangguo shi* in Shanghai, the *Hwangsöng sinmun* in Seoul published an editorial entitled, *Ae Annam* 哀安南 (Sympathy for Annam).<sup>16</sup> The editors called on Koreans to have sympathy for Annam because, like Korea, it was a country blessed with bountiful resources and favorable topography with a similar area and population but, having fallen to French aggression, Annam became subject to an alien people and could no longer enjoy the blessings of their country as they wished. Following *Yuenan wangguo shi*, the editors of *Hwangsöng sinmun* argued that Vietnam's failure to resist the French was due to its failure to implement policies of "self-cultivation and self-strengthening"

<sup>16</sup> "Ae Annam," *Hwangsöng sinmun*, May 5, 1906, 1.

(*chasu chagang* 自修自强) while the people simply looked after their own interests and competed with one another for wealth and influence rather than defending the nation against French assault. The editors feared that Korea could well meet the same fate at the hands of “others in the world” (*sein* 世人) aside from the French—an oblique reference to the Japanese—and urged patriotic young men to reflect upon the fall of Vietnam:

We sincerely hope that young men of purpose who are concerned about the nation will rightly take Annam as a warning. If we plan for self-strengthening and thereby prevent others in the world from repeating Annam’s sorrow [in Korea], there could be no greater happiness for the people of our country. We ask you, please, take this warning and broadcast it!<sup>17</sup>

In August and September 1906, the *Hwangsŏng sinmun* began to publish portions of Hyŏn Ch’ae’s translation in serial form.<sup>18</sup> Two months later, Hyŏn’s completed translation went through its first printing. Booksellers Chu Han’yŏng and Kim Sangman’s advertisement in *Hwangsŏng sinmun* for Hyŏn’s translation closely followed the “Sympathy for Annam” editorial of the previous spring and is interesting for the brief portrait it paints of Vietnam. It was meant to convince a Korean readership of the importance of the fate of Vietnam, a country with which neither the Great Han Empire nor the preceding Kingdom of Chosŏn had previously had significant interaction.<sup>19</sup>

Alas, there are no people in the world more frightened and pitiable than a nation [*minjok* 民族] that has lost its country! Vietnam is a neighboring country in our Asia [*oaju* 吾亞洲] that is now a part of the Frenchman’s map and as such it serves as a reflection and warning to our people [*kungmin* 國民]. This book describes the circumstances of the fall of Vietnam and the situation today, illustrating the savagery

17 “Ae Annam,” 1.

18 “Tok *Wŏllam mangguk sa*” 讀越南亡國史 [Reading *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*], *Hwangsŏng sinmun*, August 28, September 1, 3, and 5, 1906. Each installment was on the front page. While most accept that the serialized translation is by Hyŏn Ch’ae, Kim Chuhyŏn argues that Sin Ch’aeo was the true translator. Portions of the serialized text appear in Hyŏn Ch’ae’s later translation suggesting he either wrote the serialized translation or he lifted passages from Sin’s translation. See Kim Chuhyŏn 김주현, “*Wŏllam mangguk sa wa Ŭidaeri kŏn’guk samgŏl chŏn ũi ch’ŏt pŏnyŏkcha*” 월남망국사와 의대리건국삼걸전의 첫 번역자 [The first translator of *The History of the Fall of Vietnam* and *The Biographies of Three Heroes of the Founding of Italy*], *Han’guk hyŏndae munhak yŏn’gu* 한국현대문학연구 29 (2009): 9–41.

19 For the growing Korean interest in Vietnam from the 1880s, see Yun Taeyŏng, “Han’guk ũi Pet’unam ũi chaeinsik.”

of French people. It is our wish that patriotic young men of purpose try at least once to read it.<sup>20</sup>

Being separated from the Great Han Empire by the Qing Empire, Vietnam was not especially near and yet in this passage it has become a neighboring state in the shared community of “our Asia.” The history of the new neighbor is intimately tied with the advance of nineteenth-century European imperialism. Vietnam serves, through its imagined familiarity and portrayal as a fellow Asian state, as a conduit linking Korea with global forces and flows; Korean space shrinks as both the fate of its new neighbor and its own deepest fears hinge on lands that were beyond the horizon of Korean geographical imaginations only a generation earlier.

An Chonghwa wrote an introduction to Hyōn’s translation in which he elaborated on the relationship between the world, Vietnam, and the Han Empire. This constellation of world, Asia, and the nation, in addition to the forces that brought them together constituted an emergency in which Hyōn was compelled to act through his translation.

Every day from the four corners of the Earth we hear of the developments of the world, the advancements in human knowledge, the smoke of cannons and the rain of bullets, of the strong devouring the weak. How can those who still have a country not be afraid and plan for national self-preservation? *The History of the Fall of Vietnam* has only just recently come from the hands of the lonely exile [Phan Boi Chau], and yet among gentlemen of high purpose both here and abroad, not one person who has opened it has failed to feel sadness and fear.<sup>21</sup>

The new world in which An finds himself is both exciting in its intellectual strides but also a place of terror, as wars rage and the strong prevail over the weak. Even though the news of the world came to his ears from the far-flung corners of the globe, it is directly relevant. As in the advertisements, there is a sense that far has become near and mere distance no longer justifies disinterest in the issues of foreign lands. The words of Phan, the lonely exile, may have in days past seemed irrelevant but now An concedes that they are of great relevance in the modern world, all the more so

20 As stated above, the advertisement first appeared in *Hwangsōng sinmun* (January 5, 1907), 3, and subsequently appeared on p. 4 of the of the daily editions of January 7–12, as well as on p. 4 of the January 26 and 28, February 2 and 4 editions of the same year.

21 An Chonghwa 安種和, “*Wōllam mangguk sa sō*” 越南亡國史序 [Introduction to *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*], in Phan Boi Chau, *Wōllam Mangguk sa* 越南亡國史 [*The history of the fall of Vietnam*], comp. Liang Qichao, trans. Hyōn Ch’ae 玄采 (Seoul: Posōnggwān 普成館, 1906), 1.

because of Phan's direct experience of the worst-case scenario. Whether global transformations are intellectual or geopolitical, An sees the world in a period of dramatic and traumatic change, while his own nation is struck by a potentially lethal apathy.

In the context of this particular urgency of the now, An finds that Phan and Hyŏn's work has engendered in him a three-fold melancholy:

Thinking of these past events my sadness grows only deeper and deeper. I am saddened to think of how the Vietnamese brought ruin upon themselves, I am saddened by the depravity of the French, and moreover, I am saddened that Paektangin 白堂人 [Hyŏn Ch'ae] has now been so moved as to undertake this translation of Vietnamese history.<sup>22</sup>

The sadness over past events in distant places may have once allowed some emotional distance but the modernity of the twentieth century no longer offers An such luxury. He could not but be affected by the tale of Vietnam's failures and France's atrocities. His final sorrow, however, is the act of the translation itself. He laments living in a world in which Korean translations of Vietnamese history have become urgent requirements for the preservation of the Korean nation and his fellow Koreans must be reminded to stand up for their country in the face of foreign aggression. The relentless violence of the global transformations of imperialism have rendered Vietnam legible for Koreans and the translation of *The History of the Fall of Vietnam* a pressing task of the moment.

In November 1907, nearly a year after Hyŏn's translation, Chu Sigyŏng published another translation. Hyŏn chose to write his translation in the hybrid *kukhanmun* (國漢文) that was only accessible to the most educated classes of Korean society who could read literary Sinitic. In contrast, Chu wrote his translation entirely in the Korean vernacular script in an effort to broadcast the call to arms among the common people, who would have had difficulty with Hyŏn's text. No Ikhyŏng (盧益亨, 1884–1941), proprietor of the Pangmun Bookstore 박문서관, wrote an introduction to Chu's translation, in which he spelled out the situation he believed Korea then faced:

How sad! For the last several hundred years, the western powers have been enclosing the region like gathering clouds in the east, destroying countries and enslaving their people. As this disaster has been gradually intensifying, the French took Vietnam, a country directly to the south of us, while to the north, in eastern Manchuria, the Russians have established a naval base. Now only the

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22 An Chonghwa, "Introduction," 1.

Great Han [*Tae Han* 대한], Qing [*Ch'ōngguk* 청국], and Japan [*Ilbon* 일본] maintain their independence, but if any one of these countries makes the slightest mistake it will fall within moments to the white race [*paek injong* 백인종].<sup>23</sup>

No Ikhyōng is more urgent than An Chonghwa, placing Vietnam directly on the southern border and bringing attention to the Russian naval base at Port Arthur. Unlike An, No does not see the encroachment of Western powers and the fall of the weak as a natural part of a changing world order, but rather as a something of a race war in which the “white race” dominates all.

Of the three remaining independent countries, No castigates both the Great Han and the Qing Empires for official corruption, exploitation of the common people, for currying favor with Western powers and people, and sometimes even preventing Japan from pursuing its interests. No points out, however, that Japan, fearing England and France to the south and Russia to the north, built a modern navy, learned western military tactics, and had effectively defeated Russia in the recent war of 1904–1905.<sup>24</sup>

The implication is that Korea had two choices: continue on its path of corruption, weakness, and submission to westerners as the Qing Empire was doing, or side with Japan and its proven record of stopping white aggression in Asia. Vietnam, No concludes, is a warning and should Korea not pay heed, it too will find itself enslaved by the white race and justly the object of insults and hatred from around the world. For No, Vietnam is not a case study of the inevitable and impersonal forces of imperialism, but rather the conscious result of what amounts to a global race war in which the best path is to accept Japanese leadership.<sup>25</sup>

Global politics and global histories were among the most salient features of the discourses circulating in the public sphere of the final years of the Great Han Empire. There was an increasingly acute sense of moving well beyond regional spaces and regional times and becoming embroiled in global dynamics the likes of which had not been known before. That the younger intellectuals of the day would engage with such large political issues through newspaper editorials and privately published translations is not surprising because they had been at the heart of reform movements since

23 No Ikhyōng 盧益亨, “*Wōllam Mangguk sa sō*” 월남망국사서 [Introduction to *The History of the Fall of Vietnam*], in Phan Boi, *Wōllam mangguk sa* 월남망국사 [*The history of the fall of Vietnam*], comp. Yang Kyech'ō [Liang Qichao], trans. Chu Sigyōng 周時經 (Hwangsōng: Pangmun Sōgwan 박문서관, 1907), 1.

24 No Ikhyōng, “Introduction,” 2.

25 No Ikhyōng, “Introduction,” 2–3.

the early 1880s. What is perhaps more noteworthy is that these issues were making their way into policy debates in the imperial court, showing the power of articulations in the public sphere to impact historical consciousness in the precincts of government.

### Hybrid history and the opposition to the protectorate treaty

When Hyōn Ch'ae's translation was first published in 1906, only one year had passed since the conclusion of the protectorate treaty that for all intents and purposes reduced the Great Han Empire—declared not even ten years previously in 1897—to an appendage of the Empire of Japan. A group of Korean officials, who later came to be known as the Five Traitors of 1905 (*ũlsa ojŏk* 乙巳五賊), had signed the treaty without any discussion at court or the formal approval of the throne. When news spread of the conclusion of the treaty, dozens of officials submitted memorials to the throne, from November of 1905 through February 1906, demanding that the officials responsible for the treaty be punished and that the Kwangmu Emperor invalidate the treaty to restore full sovereignty to the country. About a quarter of the more than sixty memorials submitted over the course of this protest used historical anecdotes and precedents in their analyses and in their predictions of the fate of the state should the emperor choose to accept the protectorate. Their references ranged from the Spring and Autumn period (ca. 771–476 BCE) of pre-imperial Chinese history to more recent developments in world history including cases in other areas of East and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, South Asia, and Europe. Of the citations of recent historical precedent outside of East Asia, the fall of Vietnam to France was the most common.

The memorials submitted by Pak Chebin 朴齊斌 (1858–1921), Chŏng Hongsŏk 鄭鴻錫 (1869–1918), and Ch'oe Ikhyŏn 崔益鉉 (1833–1906) are the most conventional in their deployment of historical precedent, in that their chosen examples are entirely Chinese. Pak likens the officials who concluded the treaty to Qin Hui 秦檜 (1090–1155), the Song minister who advocated peace with the Jurchen 女真 Jin 金 Empire.<sup>26</sup> Qin, along with the Song emperors Huizong 徽宗 and Qinzong 欽宗, had been abducted by the Jurchens in 1127. Unlike his imperial companions, however, he managed to escape and return to the Song court under Gaozong 高宗, where he actively resisted anti-Jurchen hawks in the Song military. Qin's escape from the Jurchens led to some suspicion that he may have been working as their agent. These suspicions were only bolstered by his dovish stance on

26 Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe 國使編纂委員會, ed., *Kojong sunjong sillok* 高宗純宗實錄 [Veritable records of the reigns of Kings Kojong and Sunjong] (Kwach'ŏn: Kuksa P'yŏnch'an Wiwŏnhoe, 1970), November 25, 1905, 46:32a–b. Hereafter referred to as *KJSL*.

Song military operations against the Jin. Historiographically, Qin has long served as a standard reference to treason and calumny.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to citing Qin Hui, Chǒng Hongsŏk invoked Bo Pi 伯髡 (?–473 BCE), a member of the aristocracy of the state of Jin during the Spring and Autumn period who served in the Wu 吳 court under King Fuchai 夫差.<sup>28</sup> During the wars between Wu and Yue, King Guojian 句踐 of Yue 越 managed to bribe Bo Pi to convince King Fuchai to cease his assault on Yue. Bo Pi even went so far as to urge Fuchai to execute Wu Zixu 伍子胥, a minister who had relentlessly warned against future Yue attacks. On Bo Pi's advice, Fuchai ceased his campaigns against Yue and instead turned his armies toward the state of Qi 齊. With Wu's attention thus diverted, Guojian attacked and utterly defeated Wu. The Yue forces captured Bo Pi, whereupon Guojian had him executed for betraying his sovereign, Fuchai, even though it was Guojian himself who had bribed Bo Pi to do so.<sup>29</sup> Here the implication is that the Great Han officials who signed away Korean sovereignty to the Japanese had not only betrayed their country but had done so for whatever baubles the Japanese had offered, just as Bo Pi was swayed by the “beautiful women and fine porcelain” (*meinü baoqi* 美女寶器) Guojian had sent to him.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, they would undoubtedly be treated poorly by the Japanese, regardless of the help they had rendered in bringing about the fall of the Great Han.<sup>31</sup>

The most powerful deployment of Chinese historical example was in the memorial of Ch'oe Ikhyŏn.<sup>32</sup> At the age of 72, Ch'oe was a well-known and widely respected elder statesman who had played a central role in ending the regency of the Taewŏn'gun 大院君 in 1872 and thereby establishing the personal rule of the Kwangmu 光武 Emperor, then the young King of Chosŏn. By 1905, however, he had become a withering critic of the throne. Ch'oe's historical references commenced with the figure of Liu Chen 劉謙 (?–263), an advisor to the king of Wu during the Chinese Three Kingdoms

27 See *Song sa* 宋史 [*History of Song*] (Seoul: Kyŏngin Munhwasa, 1977), 6:13743–13766.

28 *KJSL*, November 25, 1905, 46:32b.

29 See Takigawa Kametarō 瀧川龜太郎, ed., *Shiki kaishū kōshō* 史記會注考證 [Records of the grand historian with collected commentaries and annotations], (Taipei: Yiwen Yinshuguan, n.d. [1932–1934]), vol. 5, chap. 31, pp. 34–44 and vol. 5, chap. 41, pp. 6–14.

30 *Shi ji* 史記 [Records of the grand historian] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1997), 1741.

31 Paul Cohen has argued that the story of Guojian is an exclusively Chinese narrative that constitutes “insider cultural knowledge,” but Chǒng Hongsŏk's deployment of Bo Pi in this context suggests that a more cosmopolitan understanding of “insider” may be appropriate. See Paul Cohen, *Speaking to History: The Story of King Guojian in Twentieth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), xix.

32 *KJSL*, November 29, 1905, 46:42b–44a.

period. While the Wu court was moving toward a capitulation to Wei, Liu Chen called for steadfast resistance, regardless of the cost, as the only honorable and morally acceptable path. Liu's pleas fell on deaf ears and he eventually killed his family and himself in protest.<sup>33</sup> Ch'oe then moved on to the examples of the first two of the five hegemony of the Spring and Autumn period, Duke Huan 桓公 of Qi and Duke Wen 文公 of Jin 晉. Huan and Wen were the very paragons of skillful military might and diplomatic prowess, and cast the Kwangmu Emperor, presiding over the loss of his empire at the stroke of a pen, in a very poor light indeed. Finally, Ch'oe invoked Yizong 毅宗, the last Ming emperor. As rebels breached the palace precincts in 1644, Yizong walked into one of his gardens and hung himself from a tree rather than face the humiliation of capture.<sup>34</sup> Ch'oe asked the Kwangmu Emperor, "Have you alone not heard of the righteousness of Yizong of the Great Ming who sacrificed his life for the altars of the state?"<sup>35</sup> Normally, the emperor would have made regular offerings at the Altars of Earth and Grain and at the ancestral shrine of the imperial family in order to guarantee bountiful harvests and secure the dynasty. Rather than offering a sacrifice of food and wine, Ch'oe suggests with this example that best thing the Kwangmu Emperor could do was to sacrifice *himself* at the Altars of Earth and Grain, thereby relieving the nation of his incompetence.<sup>36</sup>

Pak, Ch'ong, and Ch'oe's employment of Chinese historical examples was fairly conventional, even if Ch'oe's was rather extreme. There were other officials, however, that moved away from Chinese history and instead placed the current dilemma within the context of Korean history. Yi Yongt'ae 李容泰 (1854–?) interpreted the protectorate treaty not only as the end of the 500-year reign of the Yi dynasty, but also as the end of the 4,000-year succession of Korean states, starting with the legendary national founder Tan'gun 檀君 and the sage-king Kija 箕子 (C. Jizi). The treaty was the ignoble end to millennia of human propriety and righteousness as manifest in the line of Korean states from deep antiquity to the present.<sup>37</sup> Yi Namgyu 李南珪 (?–1907) also characterized the treaty as a disaster far larger than the effective dissolution of one state and its occupation by

33 *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 [Records of the three kingdoms] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1997), 900.

34 See Frederick Wakeman. *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in the Seventeenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 259–263.

35 *KJSL*, November 29, 1905, 46:43b.

36 Ch'oe Ikhyōn's age and standing did not insulate him from criticism; his suggestion that the emperor kill himself was met with some consternation from other officials. See the memorial of Yi Namgyu, *KJSL*, November 30, 1905, vol. 46: 45a–46a.

37 *KJSL*, November 26, 1905, 46:36b.

another; the Kwangmu Emperor was presiding over a crisis of human civilization itself:

China [*Chungju* 中州] has now entirely adopted the same customs as the rest of the world [*man'guk* 萬國]. Now it is only Our East [country] [*a tong* 我東], as the ancient realm of Tan'gun and Kija, that adheres to the precious teachings of Confucius and Mencius.<sup>38</sup>

The tenor of this assertion is reminiscent of the Ming nostalgia that was especially prominent in the late Chosŏn period in the wake the Imjin Wars with Japan in 1592–1598 and the Manchu conquest of northern Ming in 1644. Rather than lament the loss of the Ming Empire as the font of human civilization to the savagery of the Manchus, Yi suggested that “China” has folded before the international community, here expressed as the “myriad countries” (*man'guk* 萬國). Yi’s conservatism—or perhaps, more accurately, his archaism—stands in resistance to a global imperialist aggression that has caused even the birthplace of human civilization to assimilate. Now the Great Han Empire, the last haven of humanity, is in danger of imminent collapse.

This hybrid sense of situating national/regional history in the context of global currents and history, however, is clearest in a group of memorials that explicitly binds the treaty problem with then contemporary world history. It is in these memorials that the connection to *Yuenan wangguo shi*, then already in circulation among Korean educated classes literate in Chinese, is the most apparent. Kwak Chongsŏk 郭鍾錫 (1846–1919) made explicit connections between ancient and contemporary histories in his two memorials in critique of the treaty. The protectorate, Kwak argued, will certainly reduce the emperor to a prisoner in his own court, as Kwak understood the Vietnamese emperors to be confined. Worse, Kwak continued, was that this elimination of Korean imperial authority, so clearly augured by the contemporary Vietnamese suffering under French rule, would only decline into disasters akin to those at Qingcheng 青城 and Wuguocheng 五國城. It was at Qingcheng that the Jurchens captured the Song emperors Huizong and Qinzong in 1127, as mentioned above in connection to Qin Hui. Huizong did not live long thereafter, but his son Qinzong lived on for decades in captivity and died at Wuguocheng.<sup>39</sup> Even in the best case scenario, Kwak foresaw that the emperor would enjoy only an empty title, like the popes at the end of the Roman Empire or the contemporary

38 *KJSL*, November 30, 1905, 46:45b.

39 *KJSL*, December 5, 1905, 46: 49a–49b. Wuguocheng (五國城) is also known as Wuguocheng (吳國城) or Wuguotucheng (吳國頭城). See *Song shi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1997), 417, 435–436.

“king” (*wang* 王) of Vietnam.<sup>40</sup>

Among the darker memorials in protest of the protectorate treaty is that of Sin Kisŏn 申箕善 (1851–1909).<sup>41</sup> Sin’s earliest historical reference is the third-century BCE general Tian Dan 田單 of the state of Qi. The state of Yan 燕 nearly destroyed Qi but Tian Dan, through a variety of audacious ruses and campaigns of disinformation, was able to confuse and distract Yan forces. Eventually he saved Qi from extinction and even restored the territory lost to Yan.<sup>42</sup> Here Sin was suggesting that even when there is no hope of victory, exemplar leadership, tenacity, and creativity can rout the enemy and save the country. Sin’s deployment of the case of Tian Dan suggests a certain naïve, if not foolish, optimism in the face of disaster but he keeps himself firmly rooted in a global historical sensibility that links developments in Asia to global dynamics while at the same time holding the emperor accountable for the failure of his rule as manifest in the protectorate treaty. Sin wrote,

The wealth and strength of the great powers of the five continents neither fell from heaven nor emerged from the earth; it is the work of the people that achieved these things. How then can we not ask, ‘What kind of people are they? And what kind of people are *we*?’<sup>43</sup>

In a rhetorical turn highly reminiscent of Phan Boi Chau, Sin places responsibility squarely at the feet of the throne, the government, and indeed the entirety of the Korean people for having allowed the country to sink into such decrepitude. Moreover, the metric by which Sin measures the failure of the state is not a Chinese or even a Korean past but rather a global past and present. Sin assesses the Korean state by the standard of the great powers of the world and concludes that “we will turn out like Poland or Egypt, or closer, like Vietnam or Ryūkyū.”<sup>44</sup> Perhaps thinking that Poland and Egypt might be too remote to move the emperor to action, Sin progressively brings the specter of national collapse closer and closer, from Poland in Europe, to Egypt in Africa, to Vietnam in Southeast Asia, to Ryūkyū, a neighboring one-time Chinese tributary like the Chosŏn court. With his final queries, Sin takes his argument further by locating Koreans in the world for comparison and judgement. It is no longer a matter of whether the present dangers are similar to other past dangers; it is

40 *KJSL*, December 14, 1905, 46: 53b–54b.

41 *KJSL*, February 12, 1906, 47:9b–10b.

42 See Takigawa Kametarō, ed., *Shiki kaishū kōshō*, vol. 8, chap. 82, pp. 1–8.

43 *KJSL*, February 12, 1906, 47:10a.

44 *KJSL*, February 12, 1906, 47:10b.

now about the place of Koreans in the world and how they measure up to those of great achievement, those who have built their own edifices of sovereignty.

An Chonghwa, who would in a few months' time write the introduction to Hyön Ch'ae's version of *Wöllam mangguk sa* discussed earlier, argued in his memorial that the emperor had utterly lost control of his government. The loss of sovereignty as mandated by the protectorate treaty would be a message to the world that the Great Han Empire has ceased to be a country in any meaningful sense. Koreans would not be able to expect respect on the world stage because there was no precedent in world history of a country willingly giving up its sovereignty without the slightest resistance. Citing increasingly closer examples, An accused the officials who concluded the treaty of turning the Han Empire into Egypt, into India, and finally into Vietnam. An used the words "Egypt," "India," and "Vietnam" to function as verbs such that a literal translation might read, "[... they] want to Egyptify us, Indianize us, Vietnamize us!" (*yok aegŭp a indo a annam a* 欲埃及我印度我安南我). Colonies were as much places as they were the result of global historical processes that the Great Han Empire, and the emperor himself, had to recognize and confront with force and purpose.

An ended his memorial with a recommendation and a final historical reference located not in the turn-of-the-century global modern but in East Asian classical antiquity:

I bow before Your Highness and request an august command to execute these traitors. Thereby [Your Highness may] beg the forgiveness of the people of [this] country. If you newly appoint officials both worthy and responsible and thereby show that this treaty has strayed from Your Sagely Will then this so-called treaty will automatically become invalid. Your Highness, why are you so afraid that you do not act? If you are unable to do as I have proposed then you will present our 500-year-old Altars to Earth and Grain, and indeed all the people of these three thousand *li*, to the slaves of slaves. Oh, distant azure heaven! How can I bear to speak of this?<sup>45</sup>

Like many of his contemporaries, An called for the emperor to execute those who had negotiated and signed the protectorate treaty and then nullify the treaty as a violation of his will. Were the emperor not to do this, An argued, he would in essence deliver the entire country to the Japanese, to whom he refers as "the slaves of slaves" (*noye chi noye*

45 *KJSL*, November 26, 1905, 46:36a.

奴隸之奴隸). The Altars to Earth and Grain were physical altars where the king made offerings to the spirits of the earth to ensure good harvests. They thus served as a metaphor for the foundation of the state, for if there is no food there will be no people and if there are no people there can be no state.

In the final line, An figuratively turned skyward and pleaded with heaven as he considered the horrid possibilities of the very near future. Here he made reference to the fall of the Western Zhou capital in 771 BCE, an event that marks the beginning of the Spring and Autumn period and heralds the long decline and ultimate collapse of the Zhou state. The phrase “Oh, distant azure heaven!” (*yu yu ch’ang ch’ōn* 悠悠蒼天) comes from a poem from the *Shijing* 詩經 (Classic of poetry) in which an Eastern Zhou official is contemplating the site of the fallen western capital to mourn the past.<sup>46</sup> Shuffling through the ruins, lost in his own thoughts, he notes that the millet that would have been used for offerings on the state altar is growing to maturity but the state has been destroyed and the altars are no more so the millet remains unoffered. Each stanza ends, “Oh, distant azure heaven, who is responsible for this?” (*you you cang tian ci he ren zai* 悠悠蒼天此何人哉).<sup>47</sup> This differs only slightly from An’s memorial text which ends with the line, “Oh, distant azure heaven, how can I bear to speak of it?” (*yu yu ch’ang ch’ōn ch’a ha in ōn che* 悠悠蒼天此何忍言哉).<sup>48</sup> An thus posited something of a post-apocalyptic vision in which the foundations of the Chosŏn state have been dismantled and former officials, like the former Western Zhou courtier, shuffle about lost in their own thoughts as though they search for that which can never be regained.<sup>49</sup> An employs the reference to the *Shijing* to say what he cannot say himself; it will be the emperor who is ultimately responsible for making An’s vision of ultimate ruin a reality.

Taken as a whole, the court memorials in protest of the protectorate

46 Ruan Yuan 阮元, ed., “Maoshi zhengyi” 毛詩正義 [Orthodox interpretation of the Maoshi], in *Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏 [Commentaries and notes on the Thirteen Classics] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), 330–331 (originally published in 1815); Li Xueqin 李學勤, ed., *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 [Orthodox interpretation of the Maoshi] (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 1998), 252–253; Yi Kidong 이기동, ed. and trans., *Sigyōng kangŏl* 시경 강설 [Lectures on the Shijing] (Seoul: Sōnggyun’gwan Taehakkyo Ch’ulp’anbu, 2016), 173–175.

47 See Ruan Yuan, “Maoshi zhengyi,” 330; Li Xueqin, *Maoshi zhengyi*, 253–255; Yi Kidong, *Sigyōng*, 175.

48 *KJSL*, November 26, 1905, 46:36b.

49 In each stanza of the poem An referenced, there is the line, “Those who do not know me ask what I am looking for” [*bu zhi wo zhe wei he qiu* 不知我者謂我何求]. See Ruan Yuan, “Maoshi zhengyi,” 330–331; Li Xueqin, *Maoshi zhengyi*, 253–255; Yi Kidong, *Sigyōng*, 175.

treaty employ historical precedent from the beginning of the Spring and Autumn Period, the Warring States period, the Three Kingdoms period, the Song dynasty, the legendary sage-kings of Old Chosŏn, and finally cases from across the world in the nineteenth century. The internal workings of these deployments of precedent are largely the same: there was a case in the past, the meaning of which was largely agreed upon, that resembles a case in the present; therefore, the outcome of the present case will resemble that of the past case. In this way there is little worth remarking upon in terms of historical consciousness. There are two shifts, however, that suggest a change in historical thought. The first is that the public sphere as constituted by the lively journalism and translation projects of the period had made a significant impact on the discourse of the imperial court; in effect, the radical had become mainstream. The fact that some individuals travelled in both spheres suggests that the border between the two was permeable and ill-defined. The second is that the scale of historical consciousness had become global. History perceived as worth knowing had expanded from the canon of Chinese and Korean pasts to include world history, and the then currently unfolding histories of European imperialism in particular. It is worth reiterating that this expansion was inclusive. It was not a matter of understanding the present as having been fundamentally cut off from previously known pasts. Indeed, histories from antiquity onward remained useful tools for the interpretation of the present. Court discourse remained firmly built upon a classical knowledge that was dynamic and flexible enough to be able to absorb new historical developments and array them in relationship to the catalogue of known cases.

### **Korea, Vietnam, and the global modern**

There is a certain analytical danger in examining these Korean translations of Vietnamese texts, be they in the newspapers of Seoul or in the offices of the imperial court. There is a temptation to conclude that intellectuals and courtiers were not aware of a history beyond Chinese and Korean pasts and that their worlds were shattered by the brute realities of imperialists uninterested in the orthodoxies, histories, literatures, and literacies that formed the foundations of Confucian cosmopolitanism. In the varied protest memorials we might draw a distinction between those officials employing precedents from the Song or the Spring and Autumn period, out of touch with the currents of the dawn of the twentieth century, and officials like Sin Kisŏn, of sufficient intellect and awareness to understand that the past had indeed passed.

The work of Rebecca Karl, Ko P'yŏnggwŏn, and O Sŏnmin suggest an East Asian historiographical space violently expanding during a period

extending from the middle of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. Ko and O posit the emergence of a consciousness of the international in Chosŏn from the 1860s that gave rise to nationalist ideologies, which at the turn of the century spread through texts like the various versions of *Wŏllam mangguk sa*. Karl too looks to the Qing experiences of the mid-nineteenth and turn of the twentieth centuries to identify a global historical consciousness born of a new understanding of China's position in the world and in relation to emerging world historical processes. Neither Ko and O nor Karl show much interest in the interplay of existing regimes of historical knowledge and the onslaught of the new. Karl suggests that inquiries into continuity and discontinuity are a "red herring," since Qing intellectuals were not any more or less in thrall to interpretations of their own pasts than intellectuals from anywhere else.<sup>50</sup> We need not, however, consider extant historiographical practices as burdens. In the Great Han Empire, the court treaty protest movement of 1905–1906 was not burdened or restricted by classical historiographical engagements; they were a resource rather than an impediment.

An emergent global understanding of history did not fundamentally transform the architectonics of court historical discourse. The nature of the historiographical enterprise was still to derive precedents for present analysis and predictive models for policy choices. The memorials in protest against the protectorate treaty do not suggest the crumbling of an old paradigm in the face of an insurmountable epistemic challenge, but rather a consideration of new cases, outcomes, and the policy implications they might reveal on the basis of analyses of both ancient and contemporary precedents. These debates, as informed by both the cases of antiquity and the widely circulating Korean translations of Vietnam and the world at large, are thus not indicative of a clash of tradition and modernity, of the rational and the irrational. This synthesis was a relocation of the Great Han Empire in world historical precedent that was neither a by-product of the diffusion of an alien historical consciousness nor an anti-historical stumble before the telos of a diffusionary modern. It was itself a phenomenon of the modern integration into the larger global transformations of the age. For the memorialists of 1905–1906, knowledge of the geopolitical currents of the world was not an epistemic threat. Their historiographical and political practices were not an impediment but rather a dynamic resource capable of rendering legible the world of the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>51</sup>

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50 Rebecca Karl, *Staging the World*, 8–9.

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